

VZCZCXR00489

RR RUEHBC RUEHDA RUEHDE RUEHDH RUEHKUK

DE RUEHIHL #0046 2241047

ZNR UUUUU ZZH

R 121047Z AUG 09

FM REO HILLAH

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1206

INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

RUEHIHL/REO HILLAH 1279

UNCLAS HILLAH 000046

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PINS I2

SUBJECT: NEW ANTI-DAWA COALITION CONTROLS MAJORITY OF BABIL PROVINCIAL COUNCIL VOTES

¶1. (U) This is a PRT Babil cable.

¶2. (SBU) Summary and Comment: On Sunday, August 9, 2009, Iraqi press reported the formation of a new coalition of 18 members of the Babil provincial council called the Babil National Coalition formed in opposition to the ruling DAWA coalition. We have verified that the number in the news was incorrect; there are 16 members in the new coalition. 16 PC votes constitute the majority necessary to remove the Governor from office if the PC were to pursue that course of action per the procedures in Law 21. PRT-Babil heard a different interpretation of the intent of the new coalition from Sheikh Ali Shanan (reported via email) and we are looking further into this issue. The PRT is requesting a meeting with Deputy Governor Witwit for later this week. End Summary and Comment.

¶3. (U) The new coalition reportedly included members of Shaheed Al-Mihrab (ISCI), Iraqi commission of NGOs (Iskander Slate), Iraqi National Slate (Sabah Allawi), Independent Ansar Bloc (Mohammed Al-Masoudi Slate), and Justice Independent Slate.

The new coalition did not include the State of Law coalition (DAWA), Ahrar Independent Trend (Sadrists) or National Reform Trend (Dr. Jaafari Slate).

¶4. (U) The new coalition members held a press conference at the Al-Dhikrayat hotel in Hillah August 9 at which they distributed a press release stating that the aims of the new coalition were ensuring all views are heard in the political process in Babil, stopping corruption, and improving delivery of services.

¶5. (U) Some of members of the new coalition have denied any ambition to remove or dismiss local officials in the Governorate or Provincial Council. Babil Deputy Governor Iskander Witwit (independent) reportedly stated that the new coalition was formed to combat dictatorship and exclusion of some views from local government. Former Provincial Council Chairman Mohammed Al-Masoudi (Independent Ansar Bloc) expressed his opposition to any separation inside the Council because of the formation of this new coalition, stressing the necessity to maintain the strength of the Council.

¶6. (U) The members of the new coalition reportedly believed that they had been excluded from decision making and denied responsibilities. Mr. Rasool Hamzah (independent), a PRDC member who is also the nephew of the Governor, reportedly believed that new coalition members would try to remove the Governor because he had not acceded to the PC request that the province buy a car

for each PC member.

¶7. (U) Deputy Governor Mr. Sadig Rasool (National Reform Trend) reportedly denied that the PC members forming the new coalition had been excluded from the political process. He also indicated that he believed that the new coalition members formed the new coalition with the best interests of Babil province in mind, and that they do not plan to remove the Governor from his position. Deputy Governor Rasool commented that the Governor had not refused to buy cars for the PC members -- he just would like to find a legal basis for purchasing these cars.

ROBERTSR